

Hair Loss (Alopecia)



“Losing my hair was hard at first. Then I got used to it, and it wasn’t so bad. Sometimes I wore a scarf and other times I left my head uncovered.”

It may help to join a support group to talk with others whose hair has fallen out during cancer treatment.

Questions other people have asked:

Why will my hair fall out?

Chemotherapy can harm the cells that make hair. This means that hair on your head and anywhere on your body may fall out. Hair loss is called “alopecia.”

When will my hair start to fall out?

Your hair may start to fall out 2 to 3 weeks after chemotherapy begins.

What can I do before my hair falls out?



“Treat your hair gently.”

Wash it with a mild shampoo. Pat it dry with a soft towel.



“Cut your hair short.”

Some people choose to cut their hair short.



“Shave your head.”

If you shave your head, use an electric shaver so you won’t cut your scalp.



“Get a wig.”

If you plan to buy a wig or hairpiece, get one while you still have hair. This way you can match it to the color of your hair.

What should I do after my hair falls out?

- Protect your head from the sun.
Use sunscreen or wear a hat when you are outside.
- Protect your head from the cold.
Wear a hat or scarf.
- Try wearing a soft scarf when you sleep.

When will my hair grow back?

Most likely your hair will grow back in 2 to 3 months after chemotherapy. Sometimes your new hair can be curlier or straighter—or even a different color. In time it may go back to how it was before treatment.

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. Will my hair fall out?
2. How should I protect and care for my head?
3. Where can I get a wig or hairpiece? Will my insurance pay for it?
4. Are there support groups that can help me cope with hair loss?
5. When will my hair grow back?



FREE SERVICES TO LEARN MORE

**National Cancer Institute
Cancer Information Service**

Phone: 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)
TTY: 1-800-332-8615
Online: www.cancer.gov
Chat Online: www.cancer.gov/help



NIH Publication No. 08-6508
Printed August 2008

